

Department of Rehabilitation

Consumer Information Handbook

Mission:

The California Department of Rehabilitation works in partnership with consumers and other stakeholders to provide services and advocacy resulting in employment, independent living and equality for individuals with disabilities.

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Introduction

The Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) is here to help you fulfill your employment goals and achieve independence. This booklet will serve as a guide to DOR and the services we provide.

As a consumer of the Department, your rehabilitation program will be tailored to your particular goals and developed by you and your counselor.

The most important person in the process is you. You have the lead role in making your plan for employment a reality. Your counselor works with you toward your goal, informs you of the services DOR can provide and directs you to other agencies for additional services you may need.

If you can't find answers to your questions in this booklet, please talk with your counselor.

Who Should Apply?

- ☐ Do you have a disability?
- ☐ Are you having trouble getting or keeping a job because of your disability?
- ☐ Do you believe vocational rehabilitation services would help you obtain or retain a job?
- ☐ Do you want to work?

If you answered, "yes" to all these questions, you may be eligible for DOR services. If you want to learn more about the Department, a counselor at your local DOR branch office can answer your questions.

How to Apply

Here's how to request services from your local DOR office:

1. Come to the office in person and complete an application.
2. Call us and request an application, then mail us the completed form.
3. You can apply on line at www.dor.ca.gov or download an application from our website and mail us the completed form.
4. Give us information needed to start the assessment process in another reasonable format.

You will be given an appointment with a counselor for an interview to begin the assessment process.

Assessment Process

Your application is considered officially submitted when you have:

1. Requested services.
2. Provided information that helps us start an assessment process to determine your eligibility and priority for services. You may be asked to share information about your disability.
3. Set a date to complete the assessment.

You and your counselor will learn more about your eligibility and your vocational needs through the assessment process.

Eligibility—You and your counselor will carefully evaluate information about your disability and your employment situation. Your counselor will determine your eligibility for our services.

Significance of Disability—How your disability affects your capacity to function in employment will be reviewed.

Vocational Rehabilitation Needs Assessment—You and your counselor work together to decide what you will need to become employed.

You will be given information and encouraged to make choices throughout the vocational rehabilitation process. At your request information will be given to you in your preferred or native language or other appropriate alternative format, if needed, so that you can fully understand the process.

The process moves more quickly if you stay involved and provide the information we need as soon as you can.

How can you help with the assessment process?

1. When you come to your first interview bring:

- ◆ Any documents you have about your disability.
- ◆ Recent records or award letters from SSI or SSDI, if you receive benefits, or your Ticket from the federal “Ticket to Work” program
- ◆ A list of names, addresses and telephone numbers of doctors, professionals and organizations you have consulted regarding your disability.

2. Find out all you can about the rehabilitation process.

- ◆ Read the literature provided on the program.
- ◆ If you don't understand something, ask your counselor to explain.

3. Keep your appointments, and come on time.

- ◆ Call our office if you can't keep an appointment.
- ◆ Let us know if you move or change your phone number.

4. Follow through and complete your part of any actions you and your counselor agree upon.

Eligibility

After you have submitted your application your counselor will determine if you are eligible for DOR services. You will be notified of your eligibility determination in writing within 60 days. To extend that time period, you and your counselor would need to discuss and agree on a specific extension date.

If you are an SSI recipient or SSDI beneficiary, and want to work, you are presumed to be eligible for DOR services (unless your disability is so severe that our services would not be helpful for you. If you have a valid Ticket to Work, you are also presumed eligible for services.

If you do not receive SSI or SSDI, your eligibility is based on the following factors:

1. You have a physical or mental impairment,
2. Your impairment constitutes or results in a significant impediment to employment for you, and
3. You require vocational rehabilitation services to prepare you to secure, retain or regain employment.

In other words, you must have a disability that affects you so greatly that you need DOR assistance to get and keep a job.

If there is evidence that you might not be able to benefit from our services, you and your counselor will assess your ability to work.

You will be given a chance to try working in a realistic work setting. You may receive some DOR services during the trial work experiences. If there is clear and convincing evidence that our services would not benefit you in achieving employment, your case will be closed.

Receiving Services

If you are eligible for services, you and your counselor will talk about the ways your disability affects your ability to work. This assessment, called the significance of disability score, or SOD score, will usually be completed within 90 days after your first interview.

Level of Significance of Disability. Based on your application and assessment, your counselor will determine how much your work life is affected by your impairment. You will be placed into one of three categories:

1) disabled 2) significantly disabled or 3) most significantly disabled.

These are called "priority categories." If you receive SSI or SSDI, you are considered to be at least significantly disabled.

These category assignments are necessary for DOR to serve consumers through an order of selection process.

Order of Selection

When the department does not have enough funds to serve all applicants who are deemed eligible for our services, the federal government requires that we use an order of selection process. DOR must serve people with the most significant disabilities first. Placing you in a priority category provides a fair way to serve all applicants in the correct order.

All those in the "most significantly disabled" category will be served first, followed by everyone in the "significantly disabled" category and then the "disabled category."

Within each category, we serve people according to date of application. The person who applies first is served first, the person who applies second is served next, etc., until everyone in that category has been served.

Waiting List

If DOR does not have enough funds to serve your category, you will be placed on a waiting list until your turn comes. If you are on the

waiting list, we will send you a letter every 90 days to tell you which category we are currently serving. As soon as we are able to serve your category, we will let you know. You will then be served in order of the date you submitted your application.

Information and Referral Services

If you are on our waiting list, we can still provide information and referrals to other community services that may be able to help you pursue your employment goals until you receive DOR services.

Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)

If you have applied for services, gone through the assessment process, are found eligible for services, and are placed in a priority category we are serving, the next step is developing your Individualized Plan for Employment, or IPE. The IPE is your written plan to find and keep employment. Your counselor will give you information throughout the IPE process so you can make meaningful choices about your plan. You and your counselor will discuss your unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities and interests as you develop the plan.

You are the lead partner in developing your plan. You will have the opportunity to choose your employment goal and setting. You will also have the opportunity to choose the specific vocational rehabilitation services, providers and settings you need to reach your goal. You and your counselor will discuss methods you can use to obtain the needed services.

IPE Development

By law, your IPE must have the following components:

- ◆ Description of your employment goal
- ◆ Timeline to achieve your employment goal
- ◆ Description of the services and service providers you will need
- ◆ Timeline to begin services
- ◆ Description of the methods used to get services
- ◆ Description of the criteria that will be used to evaluate your progress
- ◆ Responsibilities of your counselor, you, and others involved with your IPE
- ◆ Outline of consumer participation in paying for part of the plan, if applicable
- ◆ Identification of comparable benefits you may apply for and secure

You have options for developing your IPE, including:

1. Assistance from your DOR counselor
2. Other assistance, including technical assistance from outside resources
3. Developing your own IPE

Your counselor will:

1. Explain the IPE components and DOR guidelines
2. Give you information on financial commitments and other topics
3. Help you complete DOR forms
4. Explain the Ticket to Work (TTW) program
5. Review your completed IPE to ensure your goals and necessary services meet DOR guidelines.

Employment Services

Your counselor must approve the IPE in writing before you can begin receiving any services or make any purchases as part of the plan.

DOR offers services, which are necessary for you to reach your employment goal. Some of the services may include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ Counseling and guidance
- ◆ Referrals and assistance to get services from other agencies
- ◆ Job search and placement assistance
- ◆ Vocational and other training services
- ◆ Diagnosis and treatment of physical and mental impairments
- ◆ Maintenance for additional costs while participating in the IPE
- ◆ On-the-job or personal assistance services
- ◆ Interpreter services
- ◆ Rehabilitation and orientation/mobility services for individuals who are blind
- ◆ Occupational licenses, tools, equipment, initial stocks and supplies
- ◆ Technical assistance for self-employment
- ◆ Rehabilitation assistive technology
- ◆ Supported employment services
- ◆ Services to the family
- ◆ Transportation, such as travel and related expenses in the least expensive modes, that is necessary to enable you to participate in a vocational rehabilitation service.

Consumer Responsibilities

After your IPE has been developed, you and your counselor have certain responsibilities. At minimum, it is your responsibility to:

1. Talk with your counselor if you are having a problem that affects your plan (such as changes in your address, medical or financial status).
2. Discuss any changes that might be needed in your plan.
3. Apply for and secure available comparable services and benefits (such as financial aid, grants, or services through non-DOR agencies).
4. If necessary, participate financially in your plan.
5. Attend and fully participate in training programs and classes.
6. Provide your progress reports and grades to your counselor.
7. Fully participate in your job search and job placement activities.
8. Be sure that you have written approval before purchasing any goods and services that you want DOR to pay for.
9. Reach an agreement with your counselor and sign a written amendment if there are substantive changes in your plan.

Counselor Responsibilities

At minimum, it is your counselor's responsibility to:

Offer counseling and guidance.

Keep your information confidential.

Inform you of resources available to you and give you specific referrals as appropriate.

Give you information on your rights and remedies, including your right to appeal and your right to file a discrimination complaint.

Give you information on the Consumer Assistant Program (CAP) and how to contact CAP.

Assist in the coordination of services needed for your plan.

Review your progress on an agreed-upon schedule, at least annually.

Reach an agreement with you and provide a written amendment for your signature if there are substantive changes in your plan.

Keep you fully informed throughout the process, including the opportunity for a full consultation when your case is closed.

Failure to cooperate, make reasonable effort, lack of regular attendance, or failure to maintain regular communication may result in loss of further services and closure of the record of services."

Case Closure

Your record of services (also called your case file) may be closed for a variety of reasons.

The best reason, of course, is because you've been satisfactorily employed for at least 90 days.

Other reasons for closing your record of services:

- ◆ You are not eligible for services.
- ◆ You are no longer eligible for services.
- ◆ You are not available to complete the assessment for determining eligibility and/or priority for services.
- ◆ We cannot locate or contact you.
- ◆ You decline to accept, participate in, or use DOR services.
- ◆ You fail to cooperate in the rehabilitation process.

You will have the opportunity for a full consultation with your counselor before closure.

Consumer Assistance Program (CAP)

If you encounter problems with the services provided by the Department of Rehabilitation you may request assistance from the Client Assistance Program (CAP). A CAP advocate may provide you with information, advice and representation, including assistance in pursuing legal, administrative or other appropriate remedies to ensure the protection of your rights and to help you access appropriate services.

If you encounter a problem as a consumer of the Department of Rehabilitation's Vocational Rehabilitation Program, you are encouraged to try and resolve the problem first with your counselor or their supervisor. You may have assistance from the CAP at any point from the time you apply for services to after you stop receiving services. It is always your right to bring a family member, representative or CAP advocate to meet with Department staff.

CAP advocates are not employees of the Department. They serve as independent advocates. If you cannot achieve resolution to your concerns at the local level, CAP may help you request, prepare for and/or represent you at a mediation meeting, Administrative Review or a Fair Hearing.

1-800-952-5544 voice, 1-866-712-1085 TTY

Client Assistance Program (CAP)

State-wide referrals

1-800-952-5544 (Voice)

1-866-712-1085 (TTY)

Administrative Review & Mediation

When your concerns are not resolved through your counselor or the supervisor at the local level, you can request an administrative review by the District Administrator. Again, CAP can assist you with this request.

Mediation is another option for resolving disputes with DOR. Mediation is a voluntary problem-solving process, assisted by qualified, impartial mediators from outside DOR.

The goals of mediation are to fully describe both sides of the conflict, explore options for resolving the problem and reach mutually satisfying solutions.

This service is free to applicants, eligible individuals and consumers. You are welcome to bring a representative for support during mediation.

For information on requesting mediation, please contact the District Administrator in your local district office. District office phone numbers are listed on pages 22-23.

Fair Hearing

At any time, you can request a Fair Hearing. This is your opportunity to present your case to the Rehabilitation Appeals Board. However, it may be to your benefit to work through the local level first before coming to the Appeals Board. Many problems can be resolved informally and more quickly.

The Board is composed of seven members who are appointed by the Governor. At the hearing, you have the right to present information to the Board explaining why you feel DOR should change a decision it has made. The Department is also allowed to provide information to the Board. After the hearing, a written, final decision will be made by the Board. Requests for Fair Hearing Forms are available from Department staff and should be mailed to:

Rehabilitation Appeals Board
Department of Rehabilitation
P.O. Box 944222
Sacramento, CA 94244-2220
(916) 263-8979; (916) 263-7477 TTY,

The Fair Hearing will be scheduled within 45 days unless you agree to a delay. You have the option of appearing in person, sending a representative or presenting only written information. If you are not satisfied with the decision at the Fair Hearing, you have the right to file a petition, within six months, with the California Superior Court to review the matter.

Confidentiality

The Department is committed to keeping any information you provide confidential.

The Information Practices Act of 1977, California Civil Code, Sections 1798 et seq., guarantees you certain rights:

The Right to Privacy:

Only information about you that is relevant and necessary to carry out the purpose of the Department's program will be collected. The information will be used only in processing your program of services, including resolving consumer complaints or appeals.

Right to Access:

You may request access to any of your records that are maintained by the Department. The Department shall promptly let you or your chosen representative inspect, or shall provide you copies of any document or item of information in our case record at a charge not to exceed ten cents per page. If fewer than ten pages are requested, no charge will be made.

The right to request an amendment to your records:

You can seek correction of any misinformation in your records by making a request to your counselor. The request should be in writing and as specific as possible. If the Rehabilitation Supervisor does not agree with your amendment to the record, you may request an Administrative Review or a Fair Hearing.

(See pages 26-27.) If the results of the review or hearing do not agree with your amendment to your record, you may submit a written statement of reasonable length with your views of the disputed information. This statement will be put in your records.

Disclosure

All requests for consumer information that do not come directly from the consumer must be accompanied by a release form supplied by the Department. Either a DR264 for non-medical or a DR264A for medical information. This form must be signed by you before we can release information to anyone, such as a family member.

All persons allowed access to your records are prohibited from redisclosing this information to anyone else without your specific, informed, written consent.

There are rare instances where information may be released without your informed written consent.

Note: The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 gives the Department the authority and duty to obtain information relevant and necessary to provide services, which will allow you to achieve your career goals.

Discrimination

It is Department policy to serve all qualified persons with a disability and to serve them without discrimination based on physical or mental disability, age, sex, color, ethnic group, race, national origin, ancestry, religion, medical condition, sexual orientation or marital status.

Sometimes Department regulations or policies may not let your counselor approve a service you ask for and the service you request will be denied. This type of disagreement is not discrimination. However, a disagreement could be discrimination if a counselor disagrees with you or denies your request because of your race, your age, your disability, or another protected status noted above.

You have a right to have disagreements with your counselor settled by someone other than your counselor. You have a right to call an advocate in the Client Assistance Program to help you settle the disagreement (see page XX). You also have the right to ask for an Administrative Review, or Mediation, or to ask for a Fair Hearing to settle the disagreement (see pages 23-27). These processes can settle all disagreements, except disagreements that are based on discrimination.

If you have a disagreement and evidence that the disagreement is because of your race, your age, your disability or another protected status; you can make a discrimination complaint, within 180 days from the day of discrimination, to settle the problem. You can make a discrimination complaint in three ways:

1. Contact the District Administrator and explain why you think the disagreement is based on discrimination. Because the District Administrator is located in the district he or she may be able to settle your complaint directly and more quickly than other complaint methods.
Your District Administrator can be reached using Contact Information on pages 20-22.
2. Contact the Department's Office of Civil Rights (OCR).
Explain your disagreement and why you think it is based on

discrimination instead of Department policies or regulations and give your ideas on how to settle the complaint. OCR will attempt to settle your complaint or conduct an investigation if appropriate. Contact OCR at:

Department of Rehabilitation
Office of Civil Rights
P.O. Box 94422 Sacramento, CA 94244-2220
(916) 263-8662 (916) 263-7488 TTY

3. Contact the U.S. Department of Education, Office For Civil Rights (USDOE OCR). Explain your disagreement and why you think it is based on discrimination. USDOE OCR will investigate your complaint. If discrimination is found, USDOE OCR will make the Department settle the disagreement.

U.S Department of Education
Office for Civil Rights
50 United Nations Plaza, Room 239
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 556-4275 -: (415) 437-7786 TTY

Contacts

Where To Find Information
www.dor.ca.gov

Northern Region

Chico
470 Rio Lindo Avenue
Suite 4
Chico, CA 95926-1899
(530) 895-5507
(530) 345-3897 - TTY

Fresno
2550 Mariposa Mall, Room 2000
Fresno, CA 93721-2270
(559) 445-6011
(559) 266-3373 - TTY

Oakland
1515 Clay Street, Suite 119
Oakland, CA 94612-1413
(510) 622-2764
(510) 622-2793 - TTY

Mt. Diablo Delta
1485 Enea Court, Suite 1100
Concord, CA 94520-5228
(925) 602-3953
(925) 676-5623 - TTY

Sacramento
2225 19th Street
Sacramento, CA 95818-1690
(916) 322-8500
(916) 322-8643 - TTY

San Francisco
185 Berry Street

Lobby 7, Suite 180
San Francisco, CA 94107-1737
(415) 904-7100
(415) 904-7138 - TTY

San Jose
100 Paseo de San Antonio
Suite 324
San Jose, CA 95113-1479
(408) 277-1355
(408) 277-4124 - TTY

Santa Barbara
509 E. Montecito Street
Suite 101
Santa Barbara, CA 93103-3216
(805) 560-8130
(805) 560-8167 - TTY

Santa Rosa
50 "D" Street, Suite 425
Santa Rosa, CA 95404-4764
(707) 576-2233
(707) 542-6365 - TTY

Southern Region

Greater Los Angeles
3251 W. 6th Street
Suite 300
Los Angeles, CA 90020-5017
(213) 736-3904
(213) 736-3960 - TTY

Los Angeles South Bay
4300 Long Beach Boulevard
Suite 200
Long Beach, CA 90807-2008
(562) 422-8325
(562) 422-9276 - TTY

Orange/San Gabriel
222 S. Harbor Boulevard
Suite 300
Anaheim, CA 92805-3701
(714) 991-0800
(714) 991-0842 - TTY

Inland Empire
3130 Chicago Avenue
Riverside, CA 92507-3445
(951) 782-6650
(951) 782-3296 - TTY

San Diego
7575 Metropolitan Drive
Suite 107
San Diego, CA 92108-4402
(619) 767-2100
(619) 767-2159 - TTY

Van Nuys/Foothill
5900 Sepulveda Boulevard
Suite 240
Van Nuys, CA 91411-2511
(818) 901-5024
(818) 901-5086 - TTY

Ticket To Work Hotline	1-866-449-2730
	1-866-359-7705-TTY

Client Assistance Program	1-800-952-5544
	1-866-712-1085-TTY

State of California
Health and Human Services Agency
Department of Rehabilitation

DOR is an Equal Opportunity Employer / Program

This publication can be made available in Braille, large print,
computer disk and tape cassette. Requests should be made to:

Department of Rehabilitation
External Affairs
(916) 263-8981 - Voice
(916) 263-7477 - TTY
externalaffairs@dor.ca.gov

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State of California

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Health and Human Services Agency

Catherine Campisi, Ph.D.
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Department of Rehabilitation

www.dor.ca.gov

DR1008 Revised 06/2005